

DECISION MEMO
USDA FOREST SERVICE

2020 Lumber Jack Memorial Trail Reroute
Lakewood-Laona Ranger District
Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest
Forest, Langlade, and Oconto Counties, Wisconsin

DECISION

I have decided to implement the 2020 Lumber Jack Memorial Trail Reroute Project, as identified below, and on the attached maps.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Proposed Action:

Lumber Jack Memorial Trail (LJMT) #4 would be rerouted. The reroute starts at Forest Road (FR) 834288 (56000-01 Snowmobile Trail LKLN Langlade), follows FR 2352 to FR 2129, and ends at the intersection of 2191C and 2191D (where it connects to the original trail). The reroute is located in Township (T) 33 North (N), Range (R)14 East (E), Section 2; T34N, R14E, Sections 35 and 36 (Rangeline Road area).

- The reroute would be entirely on existing roads, FR 2352 and 2191. Portions of the roads are closed but in very good shape. FR 2352 and FR 2191 are not plowed and have never been plowed by the Freedom Township during the winter months.
- FR 2352 where the trail is proposed to be routed does have erosion issue that will need to be addressed and a frost heaved culvert that will need to be fixed for this road to be feasible for snowmobile trail use.
- The section of reroute on FR 2191 would need to be brushed/widened 3 feet on each side of the trail to accommodate the groomer, but no grading or culverts would be needed.

Purpose and Need:

The Lakewood-Laona District Ranger has identified a need to provide snowmobile trails on national forest lands. This project would be of added benefit and safety to trail users.

The current condition is that the LJMT is unsafe for trail users and should be rerouted not only for user safety but also to avoid further damage to the wetland by grooming equipment getting stuck. The trail reroute is being proposed due to flooding on the existing trail. Over the last few years, the trail has been in poor condition because of flooding which has led to safety concerns for trail workers and riders. The trail does not freeze and creates a hazard for riders until the ice is thick enough for the groomer to safely cross. Over the past two years the groomer has gotten stuck in this location trying to pack the trail to allow it to freeze.

The desired condition is for the reroute the LJMT to existing roads and bypass the wet area and provide a safe and enjoyable trail experience.

The Chequamegon-Nicolet Land and Resource Management Plan (forest plan) of 2004 provides the following direction:

Goal 2.1 Recreational Opportunities states “Maintain or enhance the diversity and quality of recreation experiences within acceptable limits of change to ecosystem stability and condition” (p. 1-4).

Rationale: My selected action fully meets the intent of the forest plan, and the purpose and need as identified, above.

REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE DECISION

Category of Exclusion: I have determined this action falls under the following category of action that is normally excluded from documentation from Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to 36 CFR 220.6(e)1:

32.2 (1): Construction and reconstruction of trails.

FINDING OF NO RELATED EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

I find there are no extraordinary circumstances present that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect. Specifically, the following circumstances were evaluated and found not related (FSH 1909.15 § 30.4): (Reference: Extraordinary Circumstance Checklist)

1. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species. A biological review was prepared (Janke 11/2020 and Trapp 12/2020); it showed no impact on federal species or their habitat and no adverse effects to RFSS or TES.
2. Floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds. Wetlands and flood plains are not present, so no impacts expected (Moris 10/2020).
3. Congressionally designated areas (forest plan FEIS pages 3-199, 3-201). This is not a congressionally designated site inside the project area (Houtler 10/2020).
4. Inventoried roadless areas (forest plan FEIS Appendix C and 2000 Roadless Area Conservation Rule). The affected area does not lie within inventoried roadless (Houtler 10/2020).
5. Research Natural Areas. The affected area does not lie in or near a Research Natural Area (Janke 11/2020).

6. American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites. Local and affected Indian tribes were notified about this action. Tribal consultation is not necessary for this type of project (Brown 12/2020).
7. Archeological sites, or historic properties or areas. The Forest Archeologist reviewed and completed a cultural resource inventory (Houlette 10/2020). No archeological, cultural, or historical values were identified, and none are anticipated.

Based upon experience with similar types of projects, these actions are considered minor in context and intensity. Therefore, this action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environment assessment or environmental impact statement.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The District notified the public of this action by sending out scoping notices on November 18, 2020. The CNNF posted the scoping on the forest website. Only response was from a tribal member inquiring about the heritage data.

Based upon public, other agency, and internal scoping, the interdisciplinary team did not identify any extraordinary circumstances potentially caused by this action. The interdisciplinary team surveyed the area for presence of extraordinary circumstances and found none (botanist, biologist, archeologist, hydrology, and NEPA).

COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND REGULATIONS

I have considered relevant laws, regulations, and agency direction. I find my decision complies with the National Forest Management Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and the Endangered Species Act. I have considered direction in the FSM 1950 and FSH 1909.15. The analysis and my decision are consistent with that direction.

Forest Plan Consistency (National Forest Management Act): The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (Section 6(g) (3), (e) (iv), and (f) (i)) and resulting regulations (36 CFR 219.15) require that management practices carried out on National Forest System land meet the objectives and requirements of the forest plan.

Other laws to consider, as applicable:

I have reviewed this action in accordance with Executive Order 12898 (consideration of environmental justice). I find scoping was adequate to inform low income and minority populations that may be affected by this action. No concerns of disproportionate health or environmental effects surfaced. Adverse effects of this action will be minor or not apparent. Therefore, I find my decision will not disproportionately create high and adverse health or environmental effects to low income or minority populations.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION DATE

My decision is not subject to a higher level of administrative review or appeal pursuant to 2014 Farm Bill, Section 8006. The District can implement this decision immediately. For more information about this decision, contact Brian Hinch, Laona Office 4978 Highway 8 West, Laona, WI 54541 (Phone 715-674-4481).

SIGNATURE AND DATE

/s/ Mike Brown
Mike Brown
District Ranger

22 December 2020
Date

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